



2005 Legislature

To the citizens of the 4th Legislative District

Rep. Larry Crouse

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Committees:

Technology, Telecommunications & Energy,
Ranking Republican
Commerce & Labor



Rep. Lynn Schindler

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Committees:

Local Government, *Ranking Republican*
Housing
State Government Operations & Accountability
Transportation



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

Lawmakers have convened in Olympia for a legislative session that began on January 10 and lasts 105 days. We are proud to again be able to serve and represent you in the House of Representatives.

One of our top priorities as your legislators remains the same – creating and preserving jobs. We need to make it easier for employers – especially smaller ones – to grow and hire workers in our district. This means reforming state government to eliminate duplicative regulations and streamline others. **This also includes not increasing taxes on employers.**

Another of our priorities will be **finding solutions to local challenges.** Whether it's fighting the state Department of Ecology over water permits or helping local governments grappling with shrinking budgets, we look forward to tackling these issues.

Finally, the state budget will be an important part of the legislative agenda this year. We are again facing a deficit – this time in the neighborhood of a \$1.6 billion shortfall. **The solution seems clear to us – spend less and be smarter with the money we have.** We discuss our vision for the budget later in this newsletter.

In order to be your voice in Olympia, we need to hear from you. If you have any questions, concerns or comments, feel free to call or e-mail us anytime this session. If you provide your e-mail address, we will send you updates throughout the legislative session.

Sincerely,

Rep. Larry Crouse

Rep. Lynn Schindler

Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

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Rep. Schindler is ranking Republican on the Local Government Committee.

Representative
Lynn Schindler



Working on local issues

This year we will work at the state level to **find solutions to a number of local challenges** we face right here in the 4th District, including:

- The Department of Ecology is ratcheting up the requirements — even above those required by the Environmental Protection Agency — for treated water discharged from the water-sewer treatment plant into the Spokane River. Treating and disposing of the water on land would cost taxpayers an additional \$130 million and cost us hundreds of jobs.
- Allowing printers and mailing bureaus to deduct postage charges when calculating B&O, retail sales and use taxes.
- Giving water-sewer customers an opportunity to decide whether their city or town could acquire and run their own water-sewer system.
- Allowing local governments to help offset shrinking budgets by keeping a bigger percentage of the sales tax.

Being fiscally responsible with our state budget

Our state will face close to a \$1.6 billion operating budget deficit for the next two-year period. Some legislators are laying the groundwork for raising taxes in an attempt to fill this gap. We don't share this vision.

The voters of this state said "no new taxes" when voting on ballot initiatives last November — and we agree with them.



We need to pass a state budget that **prioritizes and secures vital services without raising taxes**. We believe this would be the worst time to increase the tax burden on individuals, families, and employers.

State government continues to face some of the same challenges families are during tough economic times. **Just as families are doing, the state should live within its means.**

Visiting our Capitol Building

The 2001 Nisqually earthquake did extensive damage to our Capitol Building and accelerated some renovations we already had planned. Among the renovations included a comprehensive earthquake retrofitting project that assures this state treasure will be safe and accessible for several years to come.

Our Capitol Building is now open to the public again. **We encourage you to visit if you are in the Olympia area.** Please contact us if you plan on coming over this session so we can be sure to say "hello." If you'd like more information about visiting the Capitol Building, you can find it at this web site: <http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/index.html>



Road improvements on the way

Bigelow Gulch Road has long been a dangerous, icy, winding way to get from Spokane Valley to Spokane's north side. Last year, Rep. Schindler fought hard to get money into the state's transportation budget to improve that road. Planning and design is now underway, and **soon we'll be able to travel Bigelow Gulch safely over a four-lane road with eight-foot shoulders on each side of the roadway.**

The project will be implemented in seven stages. The first stage, which includes new lanes, turn lanes and a signal at the Argonne Road intersection, will get under way this spring and be completed this summer. **The entire \$35.6 million project will be complete in the fall of 2009.**

The **widening of I-90 from Argonne Road to Sullivan Road** is also under way. While the project is on hold for the winter, it will start up again in March (provided the weather is good) and traffic should be on the new lanes by October 2005.

Making health care more accessible

The people of our state want health care insurance plans that are flexible, affordable and tailored to the needs of families. **We need to create an environment in Washington that is more inviting to health care insurance providers who left the state in the last decade.**



Consumers used to have more than 20 health insurance companies from which to choose. Today, there are only a handful. This is because **Washington mandates that health insurance companies cover more**

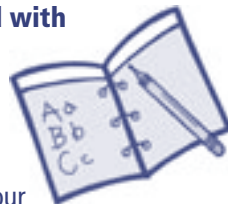
services than most other states. Each time a state mandate is added to a health care insurance policy, it drives costs up for all consumers – whether they wanted that type of coverage or not.

A vast majority of small employers would like to provide health care insurance for their employees, but costs prevent many from doing so. **We need small group insurance reform so workers and their employers can purchase affordable plans that cover the health care services they really need.**

Enhancing public schools and the education of our children

The paramount duty of the state is to make ample provision for the education of children in our state. **We can build our public schools by enhancing the important academic standards we've created and making sure our school funding is aligned with these standards.**

Last year a bipartisan House workgroup studied the effectiveness of our state's K-12 education finance structure, including how funding is aligned with our state's education goals. The group concluded that **the state's funding system has a strong foundation that meets the demands of our new, rigorous academic standards.** It also found certain areas need further review, including special education, transportation, the Learning Assistance Program, levy lid, and teacher compensation. We'll keep you posted on any changes to these areas.



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*Rep. Crouse is ranking
Republican on the Technology,
Telecommunications &
Energy Committee.*



4th

District

What's most important to you?

To best serve you in the Legislature, we'd be grateful if you'd please take a moment to answer the question at right and return it to us.

Name: _____

Address: _____



Please send me legislative update e-mails.

E-mail address: _____

Please rank these issues from 1 to 10 according to their importance to you, with 1 being most important.

- _____ Crime and security
- _____ Education
- _____ Environment
- _____ Growth management and land use
- _____ Health care
- _____ Property taxes
- _____ Social services
- _____ Transportation
- _____ Water supplies
- _____ Other (please specify: _____)



Please clip and return to us at: Rep. Lynn Schindler, PO Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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Resources on the Internet

Are you interested in bills that affect you? Would you like other information about state government? Here are some Internet sites you might find helpful:

- **Access.wa.gov** – Here you can access state agencies, apply for unemployment benefits, renew your car tabs, and much more.
- **Washingtonvotes.org** – Track bills as they move through the Legislature, or search legislation by bill number, key word or category.
- **Leg.wa.gov** – Here you'll find committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you want to know about the Legislature.



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